

State Department review completed

17 March 1957

Copy No. 131

**CURRENT
INTELLIGENCE
BULLETIN**

DOCUMENT NO. 22
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. 70
DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C 2001
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 12-24-79 REVIEWER:

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Approved For Release 2003/03/10 : CIA-RDP79T00975A003000220001-3

Approved For Release 2003/03/10 : CIA-RDP79T00975A003000220001-3

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1. DEATH OF PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT MAGSAYSAY

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The death of President Ramon Magsaysay in an airplane crash on 17 March occurred as the Philippine election campaign was entering full swing and will probably lead to a period of instability. The cause of the crash is still undetermined, and government spokesmen have not discounted the possibility of sabotage.

Magsaysay's death is unlikely to result in major changes in Philippine domestic or foreign policies in the immediate future. The new president, Carlos Garcia, however, has neither the vigor nor the magnetism of Magsaysay. He is, moreover, a party politician amenable to the control of the Nacionalista Party's Old Guard, which has had little sympathy for Magsaysay's reform programs.

Magsaysay's death also makes the presidential election, which he was virtually certain of winning, a wide-open race. A number of ambitious politicians who have heretofore held back can now be expected to seek nominations, and the resultant maneuvering may well bring about a resurgence of the corruption and disturbances which characterized the 1949 elections. In addition, the armed forces and constabulary, which Magsaysay kept out of politics, may again become an instrument of the party in power. With public attention focused elsewhere, the Philippine Communist Party might gain a breathing spell to improve its political position. In this connection, there has been some sympathy for granting amnesty to Communists.

Philippine-American relations--particularly the suspended negotiations over American bases--are certain to assume importance in the campaign. The chief critic of

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American policies, Senator Claro Recto, had already entered the race against Magsaysay. In addition to carrying on his criticism of American policies toward the Philippines, he may also press for a more neutralist foreign policy and for developing relations with the Communist bloc. Other candidates may also feel compelled to question some aspects of Philippine-American relations as an earnest of their nationalistic fervor. Among the numerous possible candidates, however, none is pro-Communist and all have at some time or other admitted the need for close ties with the United States. [REDACTED]

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4. RIGHTIST MANEUVERINGS IN SYRIA

A rightist military group led by Colonel Nufuri, G-1 of the Syrian army, is apparently continuing its efforts to weaken leftist elements in the Syrian army. [REDACTED]

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Colonel Sarraj, the Syrian strong man, has been removed from his position as head of army intelligence and ordered to a post abroad. Other leftist-inclined officers have been transferred to less influential positions. Rightist officers are reputed to have taken command of the all-important armored brigades and to be converging on Damascus.

If these reports are true, this action would be a heavy blow to the leftists, and severe counter-action could be expected. Sarraj has previously been ordered to posts outside the country but remained in Damascus.

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5. MOROCCANS INCREASING PRESSURE FOR AMERICAN BASE NEGOTIATIONS

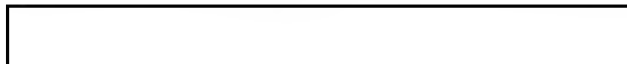
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Morocco is increasing pressure designed to induce the United States to begin negotiating agreements governing American military bases. Rabat has tightened restrictions on private vehicles of American military personnel and has adopted a tough policy regarding the expansion of Voice of America facilities, insisting that no definite agreement can be negotiated, nor any expansion authorized, unless conversations begin on the military bases.

Comment

The reported exorbitant rental demand of the Moroccans and Paris' legal title to the bases are likely to complicate settlement of the issue. Morocco has opposed tripartite negotiations, and France opposes bipartite talks between the United States and Morocco.



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7. YUGOSLAVS REPORTEDLY WILL NOT RECEIVE PROMISED SOVIET REACTOR

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Comment

The USSR has shown its readiness to extend its ideological dispute with Belgrade into the economic sphere. Moscow last month "postponed" fulfilling its agreement to develop an aluminum plant in Yugoslavia and more recently has stepped up its criticism of the Yugoslav economy.

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Belgrade has admitted privately that negotiations with the USSR regarding the reactor provided for under a joint Yugoslav-Soviet agreement of January 1956 have been disappointing. On 8 March, however, the Yugoslavs announced that "no unforeseen difficulties" had appeared in nuclear reactor negotiations with the USSR and that talks were "developing normally."

Reportedly no Soviet equipment or material for the Yugoslav nuclear program has been delivered under the 1956 accord. The Yugoslavs have recently indicated a strong interest in reopening negotiations with the United States regarding nuclear assistance.

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